

THE ACORN

American River Natural History Association Members' Magazine
Winter 2017-18



Sandhill Cranes • Live Oak Sustainers Program • Holiday Sale



from the president

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The Acorn is published quarterly on partly-recycled paper by ARNHA, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Letters to the editor should be sent to the address above.

This time of year, it has been a bit of a roller coaster ride for ARNHA, the Nature Center, and the world. But the peace and renewal that comes with connecting to nature remains constant, and that is why ARNHA and the Nature Center exist and why you are members of this great organization.

The annual Holiday Sale will be December 2. This is always a special event for me, because it was the first time I experienced the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. I saw the sale advertised, probably in the Audubon newsletter, and thought I could pick up some gifts for friends. While here, I went down the trail into the nature study area and promptly fell in love with this little patch of wildness. The Holiday Sale and a walk in the wild have become a holiday ritual for me. I hope a visit to the Holiday Sale and a walk in the wild will become a holiday ritual for you also.

If you didn't make it to the Viewpoint Photographic Art Center to see *Picturing the Parkway*, you missed a great show of local photographers who got amazing shots of our American River Parkway. A few members had their work in the exhibit. Perhaps we will exhibit a few of them here at EYNC in the coming year.

The end of the year brings our Winter Appeal. This is such a great chance to support all of the things that make us such a great nature center and get a tax deduction just in the nick of time. If you wonder why you should give, just come by the nature center when a school program is in session and listen to the children responding to nature, or join one of the adult programs and expand your own connection to the natural environment. Your support ensures that these experiences will continue.

We were very fortunate to have several strong candidates for the Executive Director position. By the time this issue is in your hands or on your screen, that person will have been chosen and will begin their work here in January. While we can only hire one person, it is good to know that there are so many quality leaders dedicated to preserving our environment and educating others.

I want to thank Paul Tebbel and Betty Cooper, both personally and on behalf of ARNHA, for their years of dedicated effort. The leadership they have provided and the culture of collaboration with staff, board, and members that they created, have been pivotal in making this the amazing place it is. I feel so honored to have worked with them, both as a volunteer and a board member.

Happy Winter!



In wildness is the preservation of the world. – Henry David Thoreau



Photo by Kari Bauer

Cover Photo: Dancing Sandhill Cranes at Cosumnes River Preserve in Galt, California, 7 a.m. Image captured from across the road in front of the Visitors Center, adjacent to the waters edge of the wetlands.

Camera: Nikon 750D with a Nikon-Nikor-AF-S-400mm-f2.8-ED lens with Nikon TC-14E III 1.4x AF-S Teleconverter at (560mm) ISO 1600, f/8 at 1/800th of a second

Photographer: Bob McCleary

Sandhill Cranes Inspire Love in Many Ways

by Paul Tebbel

Photo by Bob McCleary



I'll never forget my first experience with Sandhill Cranes. It was May, and I was deep in the Hiawatha National Forest in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP) with the Taylors, a woods-savvy couple who counted cranes in the marshes of the UP every spring. After shivering through most of the sub-freezing night (never believe a sleeping bag's minimum temperature rating...), it was finally time to strap on hip boots to search for the nesting cranes in the shallow water, floating moss, and woody brush of the small bog we had camped near. After 30 minutes of searching (imagine running low hurdles in hip boots), about 15 yards in front of me, a 4.5 foot tall bird blasted out of the brush, trumpeting so loudly that I almost had to cover my ears. It was astounding! We ran up to the nest where there were two eggs, each the size of my fist. The nest was nearly three feet wide and built carefully of the vegetation at hand, just above water level – but unless you were very close, it was invisible. We quickly weighed and measured the eggs and snapped pictures before retreating. Both parents were still in the area loudly sounding their defiance at our intrusion – their calls were unlike any I had ever heard, and so loud! These birds were huge and fearless! I was hooked. Little did I know that this bird would continue to captivate me for over four decades!

Sandhill Cranes (*Antigone canadensis*) are considered wetland birds because they nest on vegetation clumps in shallow wetlands or bogs, probably as a protection against mammalian predators like foxes, coyotes, and raccoons, which would like nothing better than to

steal one of those fist-sized eggs. Young cranes grow from fist size to full size (4 feet tall) in 2.5 months and are considered one of North America's largest birds.

Cranes feed in nearby open spaces – both agricultural and native fields, selecting food items like corn, grasshoppers, earthworms, tubers (rhizome growth at the end of native plants), and almost anything else they can quickly snatch up with their big bills. One place you won't find a crane, is standing in a creek attempting to catch fish. That niche belongs to herons and egrets. How else are cranes different from the similar looking herons? Cranes have lost the ability to land in trees. Their back toe has evolved to be similar to a dog's dewclaw, so they cannot grasp a tree limb. Nor can they swim like a duck or goose. Their young colts (chicks) can swim, but the adults must avoid deep water because once they cannot touch bottom, they lose the ability to spring into the air and fly.

Thus, crane families spend most of their time in very shallow water or uplands near water. The parents must be tough and aggressive to protect their young from mammal and avian predators for at least two months or until the chicks can fly. Crane parents go way beyond this as most protect and train their young for ten months, driving them away only when

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they get ready to breed again. During that period, the family stays together constantly, and the young learn the migration routes and wintering grounds.

Sandhill Cranes have a patch of bare skin at the top of their heads, which they use to communicate emotion to other cranes. When a crane is excited, angry, or challenged, the red patch is expanded and flushed brighter, letting other cranes know they mean business.

Sandhill Cranes are the most numerous of the 15 species of cranes found throughout the world (none in South America or Antarctica). Most are rare or endangered because of their size (some are over five feet tall) and their association with wetlands (humans often compete with cranes for water – and the cranes lose). The other crane in North America is the Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*), which currently numbers about 600 in the wild.

All species of cranes are known for their dancing. This can occur at any time during the year but is most often associated with breeding. A mated pair will often dance on their breeding ground, an exuberant combination of bows, jumps, and other well-choreographed movements, which are a joy to watch if you are in the right place at the right time. Most cranes mate for life but will change mates if unsuccessful breeding or if their mate is lost. A mated pair in California was captured and marked with colored leg bands – and was seen over 26 years later, still together! Obviously cranes can live a long time, over 40 years in the wild and up to 60 years in captivity.

Sandhill Cranes breed in wetlands throughout the Great Lakes States, northern Rockies, and the Pacific Northwest – including parts of the western Sierra and Modoc County, California. The members of the subspecies known as the Greater Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis tabida*) are the tallest. Two other migratory subspecies of Sandhill Crane use the Pacific Flyway and winter in California's Great Valley.

The subspecies with individuals smaller than the individuals of the subspecies Greater Sandhill Crane is the Canadian Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis rowani*), which breeds in coastal British Columbia. The subspecies with the smallest individuals is the Lesser Sandhill Cranes (*Antigone canadensis canadensis*), which breeds throughout Alaska and into the Eastern Siberia. This subspecies numbers well over a half million birds.

Their migration can be as long as 6,000 miles one way, moving to warmer areas of the southern US and northern Mexico in the winter. California's Central Valley probably once contained large concentrations of these birds before Sandhill Cranes were hunted to very low numbers (mid-1800s through mid-1900s) and the central valley wetlands were drained to divert water for human use. Cranes are still hunted in parts of the US and central Canada (but

not California), and their numbers have rebounded to nearly 750,000, including about 50,000 that winter in central California. You can see them in and around the Cosumnes Preserve from late October through mid-February.

One of the world's greatest migration phenomenon occurs every March when over 500,000 Sandhill Cranes congregate for three weeks on the Platte River in Nebraska waiting for spring to open up their breeding areas to the north. If you enjoy seeing the best that nature has to offer, don't miss this! Seeing and hearing upwards of 50,000 cranes take to the air at once is amazing!

Paul Tebbel has been the Executive Director of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center since 2011 and is retiring in 2018. He spent 11 years as the director of National Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary on the Platte River. ■

Annual Wildlife Count Continues

The ARNHA Wildlife Count will be held this year on Saturday, December 2, 2017. In this annual event, up to twelve teams of volunteer birders, including one team in a canoe, will set out to count each individual bird, mammal, and reptile species observed along the Lower American River, from Hazel Avenue to the mouth at the Sacramento River. Count results are submitted by team leaders via eBird, so that data is available to citizens and scientists around the world.

The data collected from this count are also used by the staff at Effie Yeaw Nature Center and ARNHA to follow the population trends of various species in the American River Parkway. Citizen Science efforts, such as this, assist us in tracking the potential effects of climate change on bird populations. In the 33 years of collecting this important winter snapshot of wildlife along the river, observers have observed a total of 187 species.

This year we are particularly interested in adding the Discovery Park location back to the count. Discovery Park can be a difficult location to navigate,



but it is an important location for observing overwintering waterfowl. Any birders interesting in joining this effort can send an email to Rachael Cowan at the Nature Center: rachaelc@SacNatureCenter.net. ■

A Non-Sunny Day

It is an overcast day in mid-January. The sun is a gauzy white disc, trying to break through the grayness. There is a bite in the air. It's a good day for walking along a river bank in Sacramento.

It's a Sunday afternoon in the heart of the metropolitan area but in the tulle fog there are surprisingly few signs of life. An occasional cyclist and jogger. Several boys on bikes hurling themselves down a series of hillocks and into space in daredevil stunts.

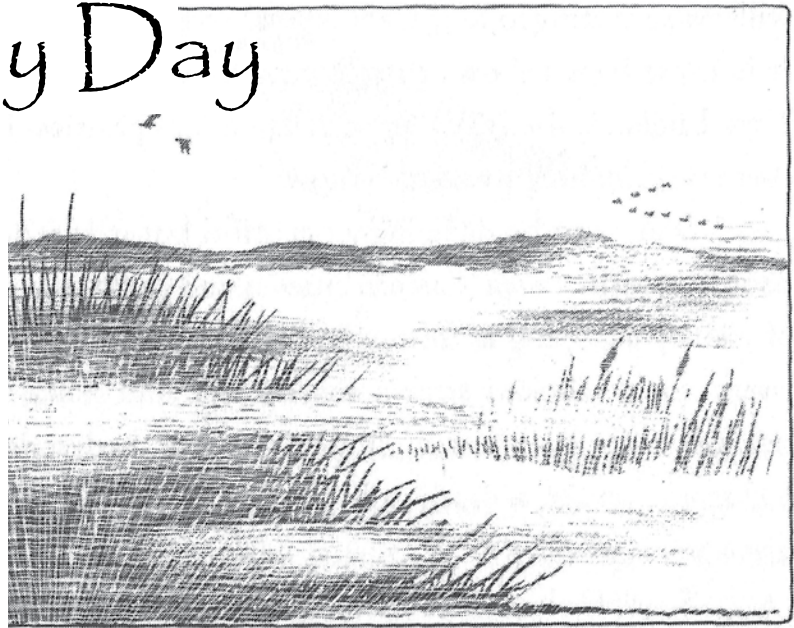
The raucous quack of a duck, the guttural cry of jays, the barking of dogs are the only sounds. And the pervasive but not unpleasant smell of river mud.

All around are the signs of germinating plants, the new green grass that whiskers the ground, the pussy willows sprouting among leafless trees screening the river. It is these bare willows that remind us of colder areas, New England, the Midwest, the Canadian prairies. But there is something missing--snow.

Snow can be beautiful but it is redundant in an urban area. Eastern cities spend great amounts of money scooping it from streets and dumping it into rivers. Snow-choked streets snarl traffic and make life miserable for policemen, motorists, and pedestrians. Icy streets exact a costly toll of injuries and property damage.

So even when it's overcast in the Sacramento Valley, enjoy. It's one up on much of the rest of the country.

From "An American River Journal," published by the American River Natural History Association (ARNHA). It features illustrations by ARNHA co-founder Jo Glasson Smith and nature essays by Peter J. Hayes, retired newspaper editor and ARNHA Associate Board member. The book is available for \$9.75 at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, SacNatureCenter.net and selected bookstores. Visit SacNatureCenter.net/ARNHA, to hear readings of the essays by the author.



Holiday Sale

Saturday, December 2nd

9^{AM} - 4^{PM}

EFFIE YEAW NATURE CENTER
2850 SAN LORENZO WAY, CARMICHAEL, CA

Handmade goods
by local artisans

Expanded merchandise
selection in gift shop

Member save 20% off
gift shop merchandise

Festive
Food & Drink 

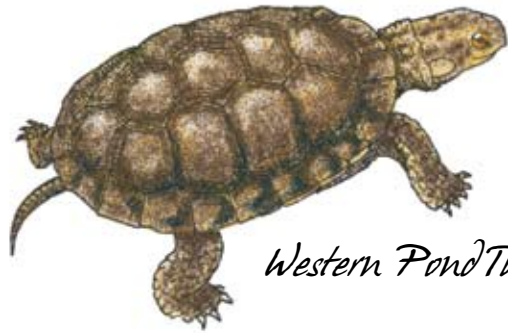


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Under the Oaks

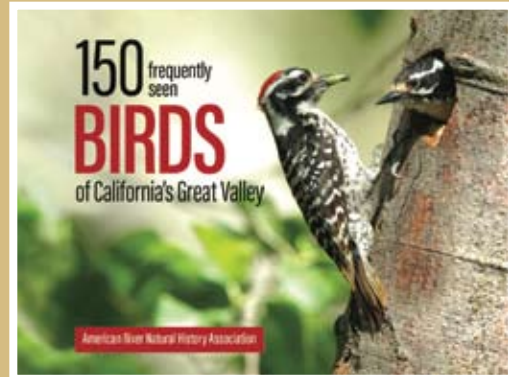
by Pete the Parkway Coyote



Western Pond Turtle

As the weather cools, animals at the Nature Preserve can be observed preparing for winter. Squirrels, California Scrub Jays, and Acorn Woodpeckers are squabbling over acorns which are dropping from the Valley and Interior Live Oak trees, especially the huge Valley Oak at the head of the Nature Trail, and Black-tailed Deer can be heard crunching acorns as they feast on this nutritious food. Tango the Western Tanager's red head has turned yellow and will remain so until spring. Clem the Western Pond Turtle celebrated his 10th Birthday and is now in hibernation for the winter.

ARNHA's latest book, *150 Frequently Seen Birds of California's Great Valley* will be hot off the presses just in time for the holidays. This book would be suitable for anyone with an interest in bird life of the Sacramento area. It's just the right size for your hip pocket and is illustrated with wonderful photos by local photographers.



Acorn Woodpecker

Photo by Kari Bauer



Monarch Butterfly caterpillars feasted on our native Narrow-leaved Milkweed, morphed into chrysalises, emerged as adults and flew to the Central California Coast where they will overwinter. UCD Naturalist attendees have been counting these lovely little creatures.



Photos by Kari Bauer

Nature Center staff and volunteers took animal ambassadors to the Carmichael Founders Day on September 30 to meet the public and promote Nature Fest.

Preschoolers and their parents are invited to join us for Deer and Fawn Story Time on Wednesday, November 29, at 10:30 a.m. We'll read the book *Racoon* and *Ripe Corn*, and learn about changes that the fall season brings. Register at SacNatureCenter.net/events/storytime.

Nature Fest was a huge success with nearly 1200 participants enjoying live animal presentations, Native American and nature oriented crafts, yummy snacks and more. A wide variety of conservation exhibits and vendors, 16 sponsors, and over a hundred volunteers made it happen. Look for Nature Fest again next year in early October.



From September through January, ARNHA outreach staffed information tables at the Viewpoint Photo Gallery in Sacramento, the Sacramento History Society Meeting, the Riparian Conference at UC Davis, the Lodi Crane Festival, and the Galt Winter Bird Festival.

The School Field Trip schedule is filling rapidly this year, with 277 tours already booked. Spring and winter dates are still available to those who act quickly. See <https://www.sacnaturecenter.net/education>.



Pete's curious nature, sharp eyes, and keen sense of smell make him a great ambassador for the American River Natural History Association.

New Members July - Sept

- Monica Baumbach
- Margaret Botting
- Michael Brown
- Andrea Brownfield
- Phyllis BrownYork
- Russell Carroll
- H. Chan
- Carol Collins
- Aubrey DeRemer
- Sherie DeWeerd
- Tarah Duncan
- Kevin Durso
- Elizabeth Dyer
- Adam & Sasha Ebrahim
- Kristen Encinas
- Marion Falgren
- Dumas Family
- Ben & Kate Fox
- Faith Gencer
- Susan Greenberg
- James Hagedorn
- Lucy Hamilton
- Jay & Debbie Hatch
- Melanie & Aaron Havert
- Jillian Jackson
- Cindy James
- Matthew Kinney
- Kayla Knott
- Judith Lerner
- Kona Lewis
- Vicki Mackelburg
- Juanita Martinez
- Janet Marvin
- Lynn McCook
- The McDermotts
- John McKeon
- Frank Mele
- Laurel Meleski
- Becky Mojica
- Cindy Moreno
- Barbara Nakano
- Kaila Niles
- Elizabeth & William Oller
- Randall Ortiz
- Gloria Otero
- Gail Parris
- David Phelps
- Jennifer Purdue
- Jeffrey Rabin
- Kristine Reavis
- Joyce Roderick
- Ronald Rogers
- Autumn Russell
- Ann Marie Sands
- Renee Schaffer
- Kathleen Sewell
- Tasha Simpson
- Norma Springsteen
- Margaret Stelmok
- Gail Sullivan
- Karen Tercho
- Aaron Thompson
- Claire Toney
- Athena Tsakopoulos
- Annette Vasquez
- Andrew & Shireen Whitaker
- Laura Wong
- Kathryn Yamada

Live Oak Sustainer Program Offers Opportunity

Supporters of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center have a new way to make a difference!

The Live Oak Sustainer Program enables you to make recurring, automatic donations on a monthly or quarterly basis. Regular giving helps ensure sufficient funding each month to keep EYNC's doors open, maintain its education programs, and care for the resident animals and the preserve. Benefits to you include the convenience of a simple one-time sign-up and automatic renewal, and the ability to make a bigger impact (monthly donations can be as low as the price of a latte or a movie!), knowing that you are giving EYNC the gift of consistent, stable funding as well.

Once you have established your gift, you can cancel or change the amount at any time. Gifts are 100% tax deductible, and all benefits of membership remain the same. You can choose this program at the time you renew your membership, or start the program at any time. For more information, call EYNC at (916) 489-4918 or email us at info@sacnaturecenter.net.

Support your nature center with a recurring gift. ■

Live Oak
Sustainer
Recurring Giving Program



Canon 7DII, Tamron 150-600 @ 375mm,
1/640 s, f6.3, ISO 800.

Photographer's Corner

Photographer: Gene McKinnon

This was taken 1/6/17. A family of four River Otters had moved from the flooded American River to visit a small pond about a half-mile from the River. The family swam around in front of my friend and me for about 45 minutes periodically climbing up on the log getting a better look to see what we were doing. I will never forget taking this

Donors -- July thru September, 2017

- JoAnn Anglin
- Paige Ashley
- Lou Ann Auble
- Anna Barela
- Gail Basile
- Matthew & Trish Baskin
- William & Nancy Bittner
- Susan Bristow
- California American Water
- California Native Plant Society
- Carmichael Water District
- Gretchen Christophel
- City National Bank
In Honor of Kimberly Rider
- David & Maxine Clark
- Linda Cochran
- Vasey Coman
In Honor of Fran Baxter-Guigli
- Betty & James Cooper
- Gay Currier
- Donna D'amico
- Mary & Douglas Davy
- Dora Dodson
- Hunt Drouin
- Beth & Joel Dubois
- Jessica Edvalson
- Kristen Encinas
- Breanna & Gabriel Escobar
- Juan Escobar
- Nathan Fairman
- Virginia Feuchter
- Marilee & Stephen Flannery
- Flying Tiger Line Pilots Association
In Memory of John Skinner and
In Honor of Susan Skinner
- Matthew Fors
- Constance Gehert
- Marilyn Gerhard
- Donald Gerick
- Ted & Mary Glum
- Mark & Michelle Goode
- Heather & Ted Goodman
- John Graham & Mary Tappel
- Gary Gravier
In Memory of Debby Gravier
- Erin Grady
- John & Deborah Greenwood
In Memory of Albert Garibaldi
- Eugene & Dorothy Gualco
- Gary & Cary Hart
- Pete Hayes
- Glen Holstein & Susan Torguson
- Rich & Mary Howard
- Peggy Hower
- Jennifer Hughes
- Claudia Hulbe
In Honor of Peggy Kennedy
- Claudia Hulbe
In Honor of Kari Bauer
- Kristina Ishihara
- Joey Johnson
- Virginia Kaser
- Jeff Kemp
- Annie Kempees
- Ann Kohl
- Pete Kokkinis
- Charles & Joan Kosmatin
- Suzanne Krale
- Matthew & Jessica Kurtz
- Jude Lamare & James Pacht
- Jeri Langham
- Michael & Charlon Langley
In Memory of Bert A. Betts
- Karon Larson
- Marjorie Lehr
- Christina Lewis
- Barbara Lezon
- Eric Liskay
- Donna Madeira
- Sean Magee & Joanne Melinson
In Honor of Renee Covey
- Dominika Mazur
- Bob McCleary
- Anne McDonald
- Robert & Anne Meagher
- Linda Melching
- M. Messner
- Joyce Mihanovich
- R. Burnett Miller & Mary Glide
- Yvonne Milligan
In Memory of Bert A. Betts
- Cindy Moreno
- Emily Moulton
- Rick & Becky Neal
- David Novak & Joanne Castronovo
- P.E.O. Sisterhood
- Tracey Peterson
- Steven Phillips
- Noreen Rademacher
- Raley's Family of Stores
- Diane Ramsey
- Linda Rau
- Tim & Julie Reardon
- Ruth Rezos
- River Ridge Realty
In Honor of Mike Cardwell &
Denise Garland
- Sacramento Area Creeks Council
- Sacramento Audubon Society
- Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op
- Sacramento Water Forum
- Save the American River Assn.
- Samuel & Mary Ellen Scarlett
- Kathy Schulz
- Shelly Scott
- Anita Scuri
- John & Julia Serences
- Lanna Seuret
- Shell Oil Company
- Pamela & Robert Shilling
In Memory of Ruth Younger
- Sierra Health Foundation
- James & Denise Silvernail
- Felix & Elizabeth Smith
- SMUD
- Jane Steele
In Honor of Alta Tura
- Morna Stephens
- Kristie Stevens
- Jacquie Taber
- Alek Tarahteeff
- Jaclyn & Jon Teofilo
- Del & Alta Tura
- Colleen Uhlenhop
- Patrick & Dorothy Wagner
- Heath & Gail Wakelee
- Walmart
In Honor of Paul Wagner
- Larry & Jamie Washington
In Memory of John Skinner & Vera Marcy
- Fred & Betsy Weiland
- Sally Weinland
- William White
- Kate Williams & Thomas Gohring
- Liz Williamson
- Chris Winston
- Lucinda Woodward
- Harold & Suzanne Yackey
In Memory of Jack & Zilpha Hiehle
- Your Cause
- C. Zalog
- Trudy Ziebell

December 2 Holiday Sale Offers Gifts for Nature Lovers

The holiday season is approaching, and that means it's time for the Effie Yeaw Holiday Sale! The sale is Saturday, December 2, from 9am to 4pm. On this day, the Discovery Shop inventory triples with unique nature gifts, beautiful children's books, science activities for kids, and fun books for adults too! Local guest vendors from a variety of trades join us to help holiday shoppers find the perfect gift for the nature lovers in their lives. Already confirmed vendors include painter René Reyes, photographer Guy Galante, and ceramists Libby Harmor and Julie Clements! In addition, shoppers enjoy complimentary gift wrapping and refreshments.

The Holiday Sale is all about shopping local, supporting a good cause, and finding unique gifts for nature lovers! ARNHA members enjoy 20% off all Discovery Shop merchandise. ■

Animal Adoptions July through September

- Chris Beeby
- Deborah Dodd
- Dora Dodson
- Rod Dubie
- Breanna Escobar
- Gabriel Escobar
- Mark & Michelle Goode
- Charlotte Lineback
- Donna Madeira
In honor of Lily Gleghorn
- Lily Soley
- Weinland Family

*Thank
you!*

Fall and Winter Camps Planned for School Holidays

Calling all Citizen Scientists, Birders, Nighttime Naturalists, Lichen Likers, Owl Lovers and Foodies! There is something for everyone in the upcoming Fall and Winter Nature Camps held at Effie Yeaw Nature Center during school holidays. The EYNC naturalists have been working hard to provide a variety of camp experiences that include activities for all interests. Prepare and sample local wild edibles in “Nature’s Bounty,” learn to love lichen in “I’m Lichen It,” explore the Preserve for evidence of animals active at night in “Nocturnal Naturalists,” discover the world of owls in “Hoot, Hoot, Hooray!”, and start your Life List in “Beginning Birders.” These are just a few of the offerings this fall and winter.

Camps for ages 6 through 11 will be held November 20 and 21, December 27 through 29, and January 3 through 5. Camp 5 for five-year-olds will take place on November 20 and January 5. Check the EYNC website SacNatureCenter.net, or pick up a brochure at EYNC for more information and to register. And remember, camps fill quickly! ■



Top right: Young camper shows no fear of very long teeth in skull from a coyote that once roamed the wild. Middle right: Young campers search for minnows between the rocks. Above: Camp 5 campers learn about our local birds.

Kids Christmas Bird Count Event – January 2018

The Effie Yeaw Nature Center and Sacramento Audubon Society are pleased to sponsor the 7th Annual Kids’ Christmas Bird Count. In this FREE event, families can join citizen scientists all over the world and practice finding, identifying and counting all the birds they see, followed by a companionable lunch with other birder families. Two events are offered, by age range (children must be accompanied by adults):

- Ages 6-11: Saturday, January 6, 2018, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- Ages 12-16: Sunday, January 7, 2018, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at William B. Pond Park

Participants must be pre-registered to attend these events. Registration is first come, first served and opens on December 1, 2017. More info to come at SacNatureCenter.net. ■

Photos by Kari Bauer

Pablo the Alligator Lizard

by JoLynn Jarrett

As you walk along the trails at Effie Yeaw Nature Center, you may hear the rustle of leaves or see a scurry of motion, and you might catch a glimpse of a small critter as it flees through the brush. If you walk slowly enough however, you may come upon one of these creatures, sunning itself in the brush. Its tail can be up to twice as long as its body, and its short stubby legs might be pinned back against its body. Its head is wide and triangular, making it look similar to a small snake with legs. This is a Southern Alligator lizard, *Elgaria multicarinata*. Its scales are supported by bones much like the scales on an alligator are supported. This feature gives the lizard its name.

Pablo, our Alligator Lizard, came to us in 2014 when he was very tiny. He was very easy to catch by a visitor, and it was thought that he was injured or sick. Our Animal Care staff took him in and cared for him by feeding him small crickets by hand. Over time, Pablo got bigger and healthier. When a space opened in the lobby, Pablo became a main attraction among our small reptiles.

If you peer into his enclosure, he might be hanging upon his small tree. The alligator lizard is one of the few lizards that have a prehensile tail, meaning they can wrap their tails around the branch of a bush or a tree to help support themselves. And like most other lizards, they have the defensive move of detaching their tails from their bodies to distract their prey and get away.

In the wild, Alligator Lizards can eat a variety of insects, small mammals, slugs, young birds, and eggs. They mate in May and June, and their eggs hatch out in late summer and early fall. The females will stay with their eggs and their young for some time. Alligator Lizards can live up to fifteen years in a very diverse habitat. They can be found in brush, under leaf-litter, on trees, and in dry areas.

JoLynn Jarrett is the EYNC Animal Care Supervisor. She grew up on a ranch and has loved animals for a long as she can remember. ■



Photo by Kari Bauer

Ask a Naturalist

Q. Will there be many birds out and about this time of year?

A. Naturalist Brena Seck replies: “Yes, the weather may be chilly this time of year, but the birding is hot! Winter is one of the best seasons to bird watch here at Effie Yeaw Nature Center and in the greater Sacramento area. With the blazing heat of summer behind us, many birds that summered at higher elevations are back to enjoy the mild winters here in the valley. Other birds we see in wintertime are visiting in mid-migration from areas north of us and use the Valley as a brief resting place on their journey south. A morning stroll on a winter day along the American River or nearby wildlife areas may delight you with the songs and sights of many birds you haven’t seen in a while. Look for the boisterous Northern Flicker probing for ants along the ground, flashes of bright lemon color from the Yellow-rumped Warblers above, and glimpses of stark white against the gray-blue river streaks from Common Goldeneyes or Buffleheads swimming in the rivers. Winter also brings its signature sounds, the rattling chatter above of passing Sandhill Cranes and below, in shrubs and thickets, the beautiful songs and calls of Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows.”

Brena Seck has been a naturalist at Effie Yeaw Nature Center since 1999, after graduating from University of California at Davis with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries. She leads the Maidu Cultural Programs during the school year and enjoys being a nature camp leader over the summer, especially when she takes the campers fishing and rafting. ■

American River Natural History Association
P.O. Box 579
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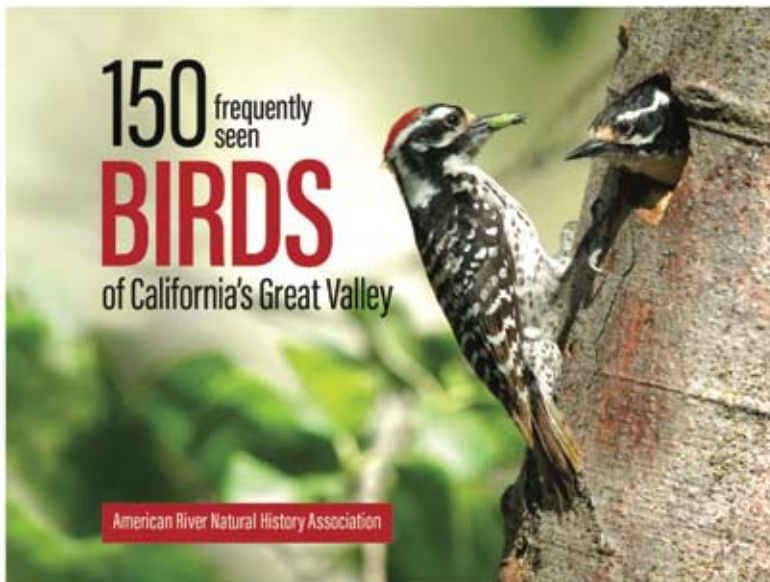


Nonprofit Organization
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Carmichael, CA

ARNHA Calendar of Events

- **Fall & Winter Nature Camps**
Monday & Tuesday, November 20 & 21
Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday, December 27, 28, & 29
Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday, January 3, 4, & 5
Effie Yeaw Nature Center (see page 10)
- **ARNHA Wildlife Count**
Saturday, December 2, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.
American River Parkway (see story page 4)
- **Holiday Sale at Discovery Shop**
Saturday, December 2, 9 am to 4 pm
Effie Yeaw Nature Center (see page 5 & 9)
- **Kids Christmas Bird Count**
Register
For children ages 6 to 11 with accompanying adults
Saturday, January 6, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
For children ages 12 to 16 with accompanying adults
Sunday, January 7, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
William B Pond Park
Online registration opens December 1 (see story page 10)

See SacNatureCenter.net for more information.



New

from ARNHA Books

A local field guide to
150 birds of California's Great Valley

An authoritative handbook
for
families, students, visitors,
and neighborhood birders

320 pages • 322 color photographs
\$14.95

At the Discovery Shop inside the
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
or at sacnaturecenter.net/arnha